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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a method for creating school libraries through the production of materials by the students themselves. Purposes of the project are to promote literacy in elementary and secondary schools through opportunities for students to read and write and to encourage the creation of school libraries where none exists. Teachers are shown how, by using a core reference collection, elementary and secondary students can prepare research reports that can be transformed through the use of electronic desktop publishing into a basic library for the schools. In this way, teachers are encouraged to make research assignments that take the classroom beyond lecture/text instruction, and students are encouraged to expand their information seeking skills. Adding to, maintaining, and distributing the collection are assignments for someone who is knowledgeable, thus identifying the need for school librarians to assist in the resources process and management of resource collections. A list of criteria for establishing a library is appended. (Contains 7 references.) (KRN)

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CREATING ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES: A BASIC APPROACH

A Presentation at the International Association of Library Associations
University of Belfast
July, 1992

by
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Creating school libraries where none exist has four major problems to overcome;

1) Teacher training

2) Lack of facilities

3) Lack of collections

4) Lack of school librarians.

During this session, I will propose my solution to help to overcome this situation and ask for your suggestions for ways to improve this proposal. I have suggested the following rather simple solution:

Teachers will be shown how by using a core reference collection, elementary and secondary students will prepare research reports that can be transformed through the use of electronic desktop publishing into a basic library for their schools. In this way, teachers can be encouraged to make research assignments that take the classroom beyond lecture/text instruction, and students will expand their information seeking skills. Because all students will be able to use these newly created books placed in an accessible, central location, the contribution of a school library in their learning environment can be observed. Adding to, maintaining, and distribution of the collection will become assignments to someone who is knowledgeable thus identifying the need for school

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librarians to assist in the research process and the management of resource collections.

Background of the Project

Statistics for the world indicate that there are approximately 1,000,000,000 illiterates in the world. (1) UNESCO reported

> Asia, with an illiteracy ration of 36.3 percent, accounted for a total of 666 million; Africa with an illiteracy of 54 percent, had 162 million; and Latin America and the Caribbean, with an illiteracy ratio of 17.3 percent, had 44 million adult illiterates. To make matters worse, 100 million children in the developing countries between the ages of six and eleven years were not enrolled in school. (2)

Many definitions for literacy and illiteracy exist, but a common one is "To qualify as literate, the person is able to read and write; the illiterate cannot." It is proposed that one solution to this great problem could be the development of school libraries using a low cost method that would encourage learning to read and write. School libraries as a means to developmental reading is not a new idea. In the United States, the interest of educators in school libraries has been traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century when Americans visited Europe to observe their educational practices. Upon their return and hopeful that education could be improved in the United States, they reported that

> the development of intelligent citizens depended not only upon teaching reading but also on providing reading opportunities. It was for the purpose of providing such opportunities that the school district libraries came into being. (3)

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in many countries of the world, there are no school libraries and no school librarians, and little hope that this means of developing intelligent citizens will be created. Traditional reasons given for this include

1) no good school libraries in the immediate locale to model.

2) little recognition of the need for a school library.

3) limited funds available to create this resource.

4) few materials available to place in a school library; many available are inappropriate.

5) no space in the school has been allocated for a school library.

6) a shortage of persons trained to manage school libraries.

7) lack of training opportunities to prepare school librarians.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to promote literacy in elementary and secondary schools through opportunities for students to read and write. A parallel purpose is to encourage the creation of school libraries where none exist. A long-range purpose is the development of basic reference materials through the organization and expansion of indigenous industries concerned with the publishing and production of printed and audiovisual materials for elementary and secondary school programs. Although the initial planning for the project is to assist in the initiation of a very small number of school libraries in six countries in Eastern Africa, it is proposed that this model, when successful, has applications in other locations. It should be possible to reproduce the papers prepared in one location for other locations in the immediate areas. Further, it is hoped that the quality of many of the locally developed products might encourage publishers within each country to reproduce the best of the papers for a wider distribution. It is expected that teachers involved in the project can serve as speakers, trainers, advocates, and discussion leaders throughout their countries and become interested in the challenging role of the school librarian.

Need for the Project

School libraries are an excellent means of providing materials required by children, to give them their "first exposure to information resources and mold information behavior for the future. (4) School libraries provide students with materials to read beyond the textbook.

In many countries, school libraries are found, if at all, in secondary schools. Few elementary schools have libraries, and, where they are available, it would be difficult to find trained school librarians to work with students and teachers. This becomes an unfortunate circle of circumstance. When there is no funding for school libraries, there are no school libraries or librarians, and teachers do not give assignments to their children requiring them to do research outside the classroom. Consequently, there is be no perceived need for resources beyond the text and lecture.

When there is no need for resources beyond the text, no funds are set aside for expanded resources. Schooling limited to text and lecture remains the only method of instruction, stifling creativity and the expansion of critical thinking skills, and the "development of intelligent citizens." One component outside this cycle are publishers of children's materials who, with no school market, feel no need to produce quantities of materials.

This cycle can be broken by the creation of school libraries, stocked at their initial stages in an inexpensive way, and one with products that might interest publishers. This proposed solution is to help students themselves begin to develop the contents of their libraries. Teachers can be encouraged to introduce students to a reference collection. Teachers will then make research and writing assignments to their students. The products of these assignments can be turned into beginning libraries for their schools.

Successful projects will provide models for other locations, and the models can be

expanded. As teachers become interested in the management of libraries, they can be trained for this role. This is the first premise of this proposal, to create materials for students to read. The second is to encourage children to write, and the third is to create a potential number of teachers interested in managing school libraries.

Students will be encouraged to become lifelong learners through this process. Once they develop an interest in finding out new information, they can expand from repackaging information in their reference collections to creating books from new information gathered from their own observations or experimentation and from the oral tradition. Much is made of the oral tradition, but the oral tradition by itself is limiting.

> The disparity in richness, versatility, and power between the language of a literate culture and that of an oral culture can be glimpsed in their comparative sizes. The average oral language needs only about 5,000 words or less, while printed English has a million and a half at its command. (5)

However, the oral tradition, while limited in one respect, will be expanding student learning. Through the preparation of oral history projects, children will not only write but also interpret. Students can begin to understand the term "biography" first by interviewing their classmates and writing their biographies or by writing their own autobiographies. Students could then interview their parents, other family members, and neighbors. Further, children can use oral history techniques for capturing folklore and tales told by family and friends, turning these into books for their libraries.

Objectives of the Project

Elementary and secondary schools will be chosen to participate in this project to encourage creative writing efforts of students in their schools. At this time, contact persons have been chosen from six countries in Eastern Africa. If this project becomes a reality,

1) the project will be pilot tested in a U.S. school.

2) schools will be identified (beyond those in the six cooperating countries in Eastern Africa).

3) an advisory committee will be chosen to assist with the project.

   a) Project steps, probable timeline, and budget management will be primary assignments for this committee.

   b) Subjects to be researched for the library collection will be discussed with this advisory committee.

   c) Contact persons from each country will confirm these subjects.

   d) Basic collections of reference materials including books, CD-ROM, microfiche will be gathered for each participating school. (In a recent survey conducted in Nigerian academic libraries, CD-ROM technology received an enthusiastic response. "The user friendliness and presumably the constant availability of CD-ROM will attract many users who otherwise would be regarded as information poor." (6)

4) a plan of action will be developed for training teachers to make research assignments.

5) teachers in each pilot school will be given a specific number of training sessions (to be determined by the advisory committee and the contact persons from each country) to help them understand the role of their students in the conduct of research using reference materials and the subsequent creation of these libraries.

6) students will begin their research studies and to write reports.

7) electronic desktop publishing equipment can be used to produce the final products.

8) libraries will be established.

9) whenever possible, books created in this manner will be reproduced for use in other schools in the region.

Activities of the Project

1) A pilot test will be conducted in one school in the Pittsburgh area to analyze if

   a) time allocated for project staff to be onsite is adequate

   b) reference books chosen offer sufficient information to create full reports that could become books or chapters within a longer book.

   c) students can prepare research reports, e.g., how will the products of first or second grade students compare with those of higher grades.

   d) students are interested in the process and sustain their interest.

Based upon the results of this pilot, necessary modifications will be made in the contents of the reference collection.

2) A training manual will be prepared to be used with teachers in the project schools.

3) Pilot sites will be selected.

   a) Contact persons will suggest sites in cooperation with the Ministry of Education or other government officials whose approval will be needed.

   b) Contact persons in each country will confirm common courses of study in elementary and secondary schools and develop lists of subject areas that would lend themselves to research and writing by students in schools in their country.

4) A list of needed topics will be developed and sent to the advisory committee to see that reference books chosen have the necessary information. The core collection may then be revised to include the necessary information.

5) Basic reference collections will be established. It is anticipated that the basic reference collection will include both hard bound volumes such as encyclopedias as well as information in an alternative format such as CD-ROM. It is hoped that at least 50 percednt of every reference collection might be published in or readily available within each chosen country. Such reference materials will include

   a) dictionary and thesaurus

   b) two years of six periodicals indexed in *Subject Guide to Children's Magazines* or a full-text retrieval of periodicals at the high school level.

6) Electronic equipment will be secured. Equipment will be necessary for any electronic reference materials as well as desk-top publishing needs.

7) Project staff will be identified to initiate projects in the pilot schools. It is anticipated that project staff will be onsite for the period of time necessary to train teachers, facilitate student experiences in their first research assignments and student writing activities, and the production of the first "pieces" of the collection.

8) Students will use the reference library, oral history techniques, their own observations, experiences, and experiments to report information on the topics assigned to them. They will write research reports, prepare biographies, or record folklore.

9) Research reports will be transferred into library books using word processing

equipment with graphics capability. Books will be bound using simple binding techniques.

10) Simple cataloging will be used to create a card catalog.

11) Libraries will be established. (See Criteria in Appendix A.)

Evaluation

Projects will be reviewed in each country by an evaluation committee including persons from the Ministry of Education, teacher training programs, library education programs, and teachers in other schools. These persons will assess the quality of the study products as well as teacher response to the project.

Dissemination

Information concerning all aspects of the project will be sent to the Ministry of Education in each country, funding agency(ies), and vendors who have donated materials and equipment. Reports of the project will be made in U.S. periodicals including, but not limited to *American Libraries, School Library Journal, School Library Media Quarterly,* and *Wilson Library Bulletin.* Internationally, project results will be disseminated through the UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the International Association of School Librarians (IASL).

Budget

Budget needs were determined to be

1) Salary and honoraria for project directors and advisory committee members so they can participate in meetings in the U.S. to select the reference books, develop materials for training, and plan the steps to be taken at each location.

2) Travel for staff to visit the countries chosen for the pilot.

3) Travel within each country for evaluation teams to visit sites.

4) Communication costs to contact advisory committee, contact persons in each country, vendors, etc.

5) Shipping costs of all materials and equipment sent to each country.

6) Production costs within each country for paper, binding, disks, etc.

7) Any references needed that are not donated by vendors including

   a) reference books

   b) equipment including computer, desktop publishing software, printers

   c) CD-ROM players and software

   d) suitable binding machine

   e) tape recorders for oral histories

   f) cameras for photographs to use as illustrations

It should be noted that the reference books and the microcomputer software reference databases will be in the English language. The project will be most appropriate for English-speaking schools.

It is recognized that electricity may be a problem in some locations. However, only the finished products will be created electronically, and it is anticipated that only some of the research sources will be found on electronic devices. The mix of both electronic and book format ensures that the presence or absence of a steady flow of electricity is not mandatory.

In the initial stages of preparing a formal proposal, four persons were named to work on the project with me. Two persons you will recognize, Mrs. Lucille Thomas and Dr. Margaret

Chisholm. Dr. E.J. Josey is on the University of Pittsburgh faculty with me, and Dr. David V. Loertscher is Senior Editor of Libraries Unlimited. If the project were to be funded, certainly many others would be needed to carry out pilot projects in many countries.

Can we allow any child anywhere to become even less information rich? When children are taught information technology as a part of the national curriculum in Great Britain (7) or online searching through the use of CD-ROM based online public access catalogs in many states in the United States, developing a need to search for information must become a component of education for all children. What I would like to have you help me with is the feasibility of project steps. Do you see any financial needs that I have not identified? Finally, how can we make it work?

FOOTNOTES

(1) *Statistical Yearbook*. UNESCO, 1987. pp. 252-254.

(2) UNESCO Office of Statistics. *The Current Literacy Situation in the World*. Paris, France: UNESCO, July, 1985.

(3) Cecil, Henry L. and Heaps, Willard A. *School Library Service in the United States: An Interpretative Survey*. New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940. p. 41.

(4) Thomas, Lucille C. "Librarians Can Make a Difference," *Bookmark* 44 (Spring 1986): 174.

(5) Wilson, Pauline. "Youth Services in the Information Society." *School Library Journal* 31 (August, 1985): 22.

(6) Awogbami, Popoola A. "The Diffusion of CD-ROM into Nigerian Libraries." *CD-ROM Librarian* 7 (May, 1992): 32.

(7) Roberts, Stephen. "Towards a Pocket Library," *Audiovisual Librarian* 17 (May, 1991): 95-104.

Appendix A

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING A LIBRARY

The library focuses on the needs of the children in each school and enhances the opportunity to meet the personal needs of each child attending the school.

1. Children should be provided with materials that will help them work with basic skills, facts, concepts, and ideas.

2. The materials prepared for the library will deal with significant areas of study that are of interest to the students in the school. The development of this library should be open-ended so that each child may exercise creativity. Preparing the materials should provide opportunities for children to develop problem solving, critical thinking, and creative thinking. Writing these books should provide opportunities that permit each child to strive to compete toward higher levels of learning.

3. Learning experiences involved with creating the library should be related to past personal experiences of the children as well as information to be taught during that school year.

4. The creation of research reports should have practical time limits related to levels of the children so that they can complete their report before the task becomes a hardship. Enthusiasm for learning through reading and writing and for the outcome of each assignment is essential, as is pride in ownership of the product created.

5. It is possible that materials will have more than one author. That is, children may be teamed with one or more classmates, and the "book" will become a joint effort where cooperation and interaction present opportunities for a broader product. Further, by working together, the burden of completing a single "book" will be shared.